



Consumer Alert

CUTTING TELEPHONE COSTS

Here are a few suggestions to help reduce your monthly telephone costs:



Consider Equipment Costs

Buy telephone equipment with only those features you will use. Shop around and compare the costs and features of telephone equipment. Carefully read the fine print of warranties before you buy.

Consider Repair & Installation Costs

Before contacting your telephone company regarding a service or repair problem, try to determine if the trouble is with your telephone equipment or the company's equipment or facilities. Company owned facilities usually refers to outside telephone lines, while customer equipment refers to the telephone set(s), wiring, or jacks inside the premises. The telephone company is not responsible for inside wiring

or equipment. Therefore, there may be a charge for a service call that results in repair work on your equipment.

Know what you want before you order new or additional services. Services or features that are free or relatively inexpensive when offered during a promotion often cost more after the promotion period expires.

Carefully read the terms and conditions of maintenance plans offered by the company. Compare prices and coverage of other options (e.g., hiring a local electrician, coverage through your homeowners insurance, etc.).

Consider Monthly Costs

There is an additional monthly charge to have an unlisted telephone number. Consider having your number listed in the telephone directory.

If eligible, enroll in the [Lifeline and Link-up](#) Telephone Assistance Programs. Low-income households that qualify can receive a discount on local telephone service and installation costs. Contact your local telephone company to enroll.

Carefully consider your need for "custom calling" features. These additions to basic service, like "Call Waiting," "Call Forwarding" and "Caller ID," usually cost extra each month.

When Calling Locally

Consider Primary Basic Local Exchange Service (PBLES) if you do not make more than 100 calls per month. This low cost service allows you a limited number of calls for a set monthly rate. The plan may have a 12,000 minute limit and cannot be used for dial-up internet or fax service.

Calls to directory assistance can be costly. Use the telephone book or online resources to look up local and long-distance numbers. Check with each of your providers (local, local toll and long-distance) for the current rates they charge for directory assistance. (Rates vary by company and can change without notice.) Allowing the company to put the call through for you will add an extra charge.

Note: In Michigan, all telecommunications services and charges are deregulated except for Primary Basic Local Exchange Service (PBLES) (the 100 calls, 12,000 minutes

of use plan). When shopping for local service, obtain price quotes from three or more different telecommunications providers. Be sure to get quotes that include all fees and charges, and, once service is established, closely monitor your monthly bill. Fees and charges can change with 30 day notice per the Michigan Telecommunications Act.

When Calling Long-Distance

Explore the rates offered by long-distance companies. Some may offer discounts on calls made at certain times of the day – or on weekends or holidays.

When possible, dial direct from your residential telephone. There are additional charges for operator assisted, collect and credit card calls, and calls billed to another number.

Limit long-distance directory assistance calls. Such calls result in additional charges.

When conducting business with an out-of-town company by telephone, ask if they have a toll free number. If the company does not have a toll free number, call the company and ask them to call you back.

Contact your local and long-distance telephone companies and ask about money saving ideas.

Use the following Cost Cutting Checklists to help reduce telephone expenses.

Checklist:

- ✓ Buy telephone equipment with only those features that you will use.
- ✓ Place repair calls only when the problem involves company owned equipment.
- ✓ Examine warranties before buying telephone equipment.
- ✓ Know what service and features you want before ordering local telephone service.
- ✓ Consider the additional costs of “custom calling” features.
- ✓ Consider putting a block on 900 / 976 pay-per-use calls and international toll calls.

Follow these tips for savings on local calls:

- ✓ If eligible, sign up for the Lifeline and Link-up telephone assistance programs.
- ✓ Limit calls to directory assistance. Use your telephone book or online directories instead.
- ✓ Have your telephone number listed in the directory.
- ✓ Consider placing a third party billing block on your service.
- ✓ Consider placing a collect call block on your service.
- ✓ Before switching to any local telephone carrier, check with other people who are currently using the service to see if they are satisfied.

Follow these tips for long-distance savings:

- ✓ Call during discounted times.
- ✓ Limit calls to directory assistance.
- ✓ Avoid placing operator-assisted calls.
- ✓ Call from your home telephone when possible.
- ✓ Periodically explore the rates and services offered by competing long-distance companies.
- ✓ Use a timer or clock to limit the length of long-distance calls.
- ✓ If you make relatively few long-distance calls, consider canceling your long-distance service and using a pre-paid calling card to place those calls.
- ✓ Before switching to any long-distance carrier, check with other people who are currently using the service to see if they are satisfied.

